2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1952) 1960 RV3 Haiti RV3

541 half-demon cannibals who meet in secret in the hollow heart of the mapou tree. Some are dressed in comic ancient military attire, replete with swords, epaulets, medals, and outlandish beards, representing "the Generals." Others, under the name Bande Autophonique, follow a human phonograph—a leader singing through an antique Edison horn.

541 53 And there are bands of male *rubanniers*, or Maypole dancers, some of them attired as women, weaving their colored ribbons around portable poles, to the accompaniment of guitars, marimbulas, and cha-chas. Male stick dancers known as *batonni*, dressed in women's clothing, crouch in circles and perform baton-tapping dances to the accompaniment of drumming and singing. Other small bands wander about impersonating characters from folklore or politics in grotesque homemade costumes. One might see, for example, a fanciful bocor driving before him a band of zombies, wielding a whip, and barking out weird raucous commands.

After the cataclysmic grand finale of the Mardi Gras at Shrovetide there is the briefest of lulls, and then the country is in the throes of Rara. The day of the *roi* Lwalwadi (the King of Lwalwadi) has arrived. Hundreds of Rara bands move through the towns and villages, each with its orchestra of bamboo trumpets or conch-shell horns and its "king"—an ornately clad dancer or baton juggler. The Rara bands move from place to place, dance, sing, exhibit their featured performers, and then move on, pressed perhaps by other bands behind them or jostled by another group moving in the opposite direction. When darkness comes, the bands light their way with wooden torches or candelabra of tiny oil lamps. Every week end for seven weeks, in the heat of day and the darkness of night, the mountain trails are alive with these processions. [416]

541 The Rara festivities reach their climax on Good Friday week end, and by Easter morning they are ended. During these final days there is a last grand display, with troupes coming in from the mountains and the plains to the larger cities and towns. One of the traditional Rara convocation centers in the south is the town of Léogane. On Good Friday week end, Léogane is transformed into a milling, surging, trumpeting mass of celebrating country people.

[533] [831] [535] The songs heard during Rara are full of praise or derision for well-known personalities. Some of them are boldly ribald or licentious. And often the dancing itself is openly sexual in its implications. Haitians humorously refer to this kind of dancing as *enragé* (enraged, crazy).

541 675 Early in January, even while the Mardi Gras is in progress, each community gets down to the business of organizing its Rara group. It may be organized in one of several ways. In certain communities there

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1969) 1960 SV3 Hait SV3

and covered with tiny mirrors or bits of colored glass. The towering headdress of antlers or papier-mâché sculpture unavoidably recalls similar headdresses in West Africa. Each roi has his own style of dance, which is usually accompanied by drums. It may be a belly dance, a dance of delicate balance, or one of complicated footwork and semiacrobatics such as the imitation of a pair of scissors at work. Throughout the dancing the headdress remains majestically erect.

In addition to the roi Lwalwali and the mâit' Rara (who is constantly in the midst of things, blowing his whistle), there are other traditional Rara personalities: the *major jone*, who juggles with a metal baton (sometimes two or three of these jugglers work together), and the *jongleur*, a juggler or strong man who performs such feats as dancing while holding a fully set table off the ground with his teeth.

On the southwest peninsula, in the region around Jérémie, there is a splurge of wrestling exhibitions during Rara days. Known as *pingé*, this festival wrestling is done with a background of excited drumming and has a striking resemblance to wrestling traditions in West Africa. Local "champions" will invade a neighboring community, sometimes traveling considerable distances to make a challenge. As in West Africa, some of these wrestlers take their own musicians with them. The musicians often are provided by the village in which the events take place. If a challenge is accepted, the spectators form a large circle, with the wrestlers in the center and the musicians to one side. There may be drums and bamboo flutes, occasionally supplemented by large earthern jars and lengths of bamboo beaten with sticks. The wrestlers are dressed only in shorts. When a man is thrown, the event is over, and another pair of wrestlers takes over. Sometimes a "champion" will take on a series of opponents until he is tired. Afterward he may move on to another community to find new competition, perhaps accompanied by a large group of friends and supporters from his own village. When the Rara season comes to an end, pingé is over for the year. It is one of the few athletic sport activities of the Haitian peasant.

And now and then during Rara a *debois* is seen. The *debois* is a carved wooden marionette with a short handle below. Its arms and legs are moved by pulling a string. It is usually painted, and sometimes it is dressed. One debois observed was provided with a loose dresslike costume; when the string was pulled, a large phallus hinged into view in an erect position. This marionette was an object of endless funmaking among spectators.[*]

Another type of marionette is the "Two Kings," made of papier-mâché and operated with strings. The "Two Kings," sitting in a papier-

[*] [Footnote appears in Category 116, p. 351. --Analyst]

2: Courlander B-4 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Hait SV3

server, commenting upon the dances of the elite and of the peasant declared: One such ob- 114 535

> All the more undisguised is the crude sensuality among the lower classes of the Haitian population. Here every motion is obscene; and I am not at all considering the popular merrymakings or dance festivals secretly held partly in open, partly in forests, which are more like orgies, in which the African savagery, which has outlived centuries, has unbridled expression.[1]

Whatever the Haitian dance is, it is none of these things. The Haitian himself is neither obscene nor unbridled. His dancing, like his everyday life, is governed by social controls. He would be as surprised and offended by a sexual orgy as most Europeans. But he is not burdened with abstract concepts of chastity. Sex impulses are as fundamental and as taken for granted as rain, drought, and sunlight. The Haitian finds no virtue in living according to standards that have no relation to his realities. 535 831 [183]

The Haitian, like the West African, is undoubtedly a less tormented creature, so far as sex is concerned, than his European and American cousins. Since he is less tormented he can be more frank. And it was an expression of this frankness in certain of the Haitian secular dances that once aroused dismay among foreign chroniclers, and that still stirs the curiosity of tourists.

Yet if you were to witness fifty Haitian dances in their natural setting, you still might not see any direct sex expression. You might see more sex play and display in a dance hall or night club in New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, or Los Angeles. That is not to say that there are no sexual allusions in Haitian dancing. In the ordinary Saturday night *bamboche*, or social dance, there may be a good deal of loin movement and suggestion. In Haitian context, however, it is no more significant than two persons of opposite sexes pressing close together to the music of a dreamy orchestra at the "Roseland." In Haitian religious dancing, sexual motifs may occasionally emerge, but they are integral parts of ritualistic symbolism.

One of the deficiencies of early literature on the dances of Haiti is that it did not differentiate between religious and secular dances. Furthermore, it is evident that writers tended to use a single name, such as Chica or Bamboula, to cover virtually any kind of dance festivity, much as many white Cubans refer today to all sorts of Afro-Cuban cult dances as Bembé. Because the terminology of ill-informed planters was adopted by the chroniclers, we are now able to form only some very general notions of Haitian dancing of the eighteenth century and before. Of all the reporters on the dance, Moreau de Saint-Méry seems to have been aware of differences, though his frequent departures into specula- 114 535

[1] [Quoted in Courlander, Haiti Singing, P. 73. Cf. P. 352, Category 116 -- Analyst]

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1959) 1960 SV3 Hait SV3

tempo. The chorus and leader sing responsively, their parts overlapping in traditional African style. The shoulder movements, foot movements, the way the arms are carried, and the typical posture of feet flat on the ground, bent knees, and swayed back—all are of African derivation. These postures and movements are broad and direct. There are few of the decorative and "fine" movements that one sees in the dances of Indonesia, Cambodia, and India. Where the Javanese lays stress on the pose of the hands and the delicate movements of the fingers, the Haitian dancer is concerned with the position of the arms and the motions of the shoulders. The Indonesian sense of poised balance or suspended movement is absent. In its place there is an attitude of strong frontal assault against natural forces such as gravity, or direct submission to those forces. There is almost always a feeling of solidity and stability in Haitian posture, and of a proximity between the body and the earth, but the total effect is dynamic. Indonesian dancing seems to express a comprehension of the unseen and the supernatural; Haitian dancing seems to express an intimate understanding of nature.

Dancing touches on virtually every aspect of life in Haiti. It plays a part in the supplication of loa, the placation of the dead, and the making of magic; in the consecration of a hounfor, the installation of a houngan, and the initiation of cult members; in planting, harvesting, and house-building. Catholic Church holidays, Nine Nights, baptisms, the election of a new president, and ordinary social gatherings—all are celebrated, in part, at least, by dancing.

Haitian dancing is participative rather than exhibitionistic. It is to join rather than to watch. There are some dances, however, which require special skills, and a few which are highly individualistic. Several types of dances are described elsewhere in this book. Verbal description cannot do justice to an art such as dancing, of course; but some brief sketches may help to suggest the differences between one Haitian dance and another.

In the Congo Mazonne, for example, men and women pair off and dance face to face, making contact occasionally but only briefly. The arms are stretched forward as though to embrace the partner around the waist, but the actual embrace never materializes. The partners dance sometimes as though they are unaware of each other and are simply part of a larger group; then they approach, move as mirrored reproductions, and separate. Loin movement is free, and there is a restrained sexual intensity, though direct sexual implications are not necessarily present. Sometimes the woman holds the hem of her skirt in her hands, while the man holds his jacket open toward his partner.

2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1956) 1960 970 Haiti 973

Maxwandi. In present-day Trinidad there is a Calinda dance which closely resembles the Maxwandi; Puerto Rico has its Bomba Calindán; and under another name the "battle dance" survives among Negro communities in Suriname. The counterpart of the Calinda is Brazil is the Capoeira, for which musical accompaniment is provided by African-style "belly harps" (musical bows with gourd resonators) called berimbaus. The tradition lingers on in Haiti in modern mock prize-fighting dances sometimes performed in Rara season.

The stick dance (*Batonnie*) of the Haitian carnival season, mentioned in chapter 8, is of more than passing interest for the reason that almost identical dances have been reported from some areas of West Africa. In the Haitian dance (see fig. 73) the baton wielders, all males, for unexplained reasons are attired in women's clothing. A photograph made in 1958 of a baton dance among the Ewe people of Togoland depicts a scene scarcely distinguishable from a Haitian Rara performance, and it is noteworthy that its all-male cast is in women's dress.[1]

In addition, there remain a number of fragments of dances of the past. In religious ritual, on rare occasions, one may see animal dances in which the performers mimic animal movements, holding in their hands long sticks to simulate front legs. This type of dance has been reported frequently in West Africa, particularly in connection with totemic rituals.

There is a dance in the Arada ritual in which the Ju Legba is invoked. A houngi—usually a man—comes onto the dance court wearing a kind of cane-crutch called the *Aston* Legba, or Legba stick. The baton is about the length of a cane, with a long, grotesquely twisted "handle" that fits under the crotch of the legs. The dancer wraps one leg around the stick and walks as though he has only one foot. In the dance, he spins around on the stick, leaps, and pirouettes. Identification of the stick as well as the dancer with Legba, and its position between the legs, seem clearly to relate it to the phallic sticks used in dances for Legba in Dahomey.

Among the secular exhibitionistic dances of Haiti, there is one in which a man stands on his head and goes through erotic motions to the accompaniment of drums.

In addition to the almost countless dances of African origin or inspiration, there is the ever-popular Meringue, a European-type social dance which is known in many forms. Haitian connoisseurs of this dance believe there are three main forms of the Meringue: the "Meringue de Concert," in which the rhythm is slow and "caressing"; the "dance Meringue," in which the rhythm is quasi-fast and very gay; and the "Meringue Coundjaille," in which the rhythm is very fast. The last

[1] [United Nations Photograph no. 62065. Cf p 352, category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander 8-4 (1937-1949) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

form,[2] is heard most often during carnival days. In all variations of the Meringue, the dance is performed by couples in ballroom style. Among the elite, it is restrained. Elsewhere it is much more animated, with free and uninhibited pelvic motions similar to those seen at the Saturday night *bamboche*. Although the Haitian regards his Meringue as a national popular dance, Spanish-type music has infiltrated heavily from the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and other islands of the West Indies. Thousands of Haitians returning from contract labor in Cuba have brought with them not only Cuban songs and rhythms but Cuban instruments as well. It has not been a one-way affair, however, for the Arada cults of eastern Cuba have been built substantially around immigrants from Haiti, and in the Cuban mountains you may hear music and see dances of Afro-Haitian origin.

Still other kinds of dances are to be found in remote villages of Haiti—the old folk dances of Europe. The villagers still know and perform the waltz, the polka, the mazurka and the quadrille, usually to the accompaniment of violins or guitars, or possibly an accordion.

But the influences are not all ancient ones. Jazz has infiltrated the Meringue. And some years ago a small boy asked me with some concern whether I had taken proper account of a very important dance called *le Mark button*.

Following is a list of dances known to Haitians today. Some of them are found throughout Haiti, some are known only regionally, and a few are on the verge of extinction.

Dances Connected with Vodoun Ritual

Arada, or Rada: One of the main dances of the Vodoun service, named after the Dahomean city and cult center, Allada.

Anago, or Nago: Named after the Nagos, a branch of the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. For deities of Nago origin.

Mahi: Named after the Mahi people of Dahomey.

Dérédé: A Mahi dance of northern Haiti.

Parigale: Another Mahi type of dance. Possibly from *pas régal* (royal step).

Jeruzalo, or Yeruzalo: A supplication dance, variously called Jeruzalo Dobu (*des bas*, low back), Jeruzalo Jénou (*genoux*, knees), and Dobalo.

Zépaule: A supplication dance in which the movements are made primarily by the shoulders (*les épaules*). It is sometimes called Jeruzalo Zépaule or Jeruzalo Débout (standing Jeruzalo).

Pharoredoun: Another type of shoulder dance known in the north.

Banda, or Chire: A gay and sometimes ribald dance, said to be much favored by the las Cousin Zaka and the las Gédé.

Mazoone Rada: The "Masonic" Rada dance; often danced for the las Gédé.

Carabinier or Crabinier: A rest dance, interspersed into long-drawn-out Arada

[2] [i.e. The "Meringue Coudejaille" in which the rhythm is very fast. --Analyst]

I say it belongs to the old man! *Ciyé!* *
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyé!*
I say it's the old man's affair! *Ciyé!*
It's the old man's thing! *Ciyé!*
I say I'll look for it! *Ciyé!*
I'm going to take it! *Ciyé!*
I say it belongs to the old man, *Ciyé!*
It's the old man's thing, *Ciyé!*

Another burlesque of a quarrel concerns a mother who has sent her daughter down to the river to do the washing. Some question arises as to whether the girl went down to the river at all, or whether she went elsewhere. There is implicit suggestion that the girl may have been at a rendezvous. The mother and the girl argue back and forth:

Main voyé Lanmeci nan dlo wa,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas alé!	She didn't go!
Main voyé Lanmeci nan dlo wa,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas alé!	She didn't go!
Main voyé Lanmeci nan dlo wa,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas alé!	She didn't go!
Main voyé Lanmeci nan dlo wa,	I sent Lanmeci to the water,
Li pas alé!	She didn't go!
Lanmeci conê ou té yé?	Lanmeci, where are you?
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm té yé!	I was there!
Li'm! [Ex. say]	There!

Most of the scandal songs are fragmentary and tangent, though clear in implication, like this one:

C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin!
C'est pas faute moin manman!
C'est pas faute moin!
Guinyain moune t'ap marché dépé bien!
Rwo wopo!
Guinyain moune t'ap marché dépé bien!
Guinyain moune nin lacour à,
Prend nouvelle ok, no! [Ex. rot]

It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault!

* Used as an exclamation.

2: Courlander 3-5 (1937-1952) 1960 BV3 Haiti BV3

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It wasn't my fault!
It wasn't my fault, mother!
It wasn't my fault!
There was a man looking for a bargain!
Rara oueyal *
There was a man looking for a bargain!
There was a man in the yard,
Carry the news, oh, *oui* †

Another scandal song, spiced with ridicule, refers tangently to a specific situation and points a moral:

Coulié li yé wouille-o! Coulié li yé wouille-o!
Coulié li yé wouille-o! Coulié li yé wouille-o!
Si ou prend yon femme pas vlé lavé pied
Ou pas besoin mandé qui gen li yé! [Ex. 109]

Now she is there, *wouille-o!* Now she is there, *wouille-o!* ‡
Now she is there, *wouille-o!* Now she is there, *wouille-o!*
If you take a woman who doesn't want to wash her feet
You don't have to ask what kind she is!

(515) The practice of washing one's feet before an intimacy enters into numerous gossip songs. In the following one, the woman asks her friend Pierre for water to wash with so that she may take advantage of Joseph's absence in the city:

Ba moin dleau nèg' moin pou' moin lavé pied moin!
Mandé dleau moin chè' Pierre pou' moin lavé pied moin!
Mandé dleau pou' moin lavé pied moin!
Joseph danger pas là, l'allé laville oh!
Joseph danger pas là, l'allé laville oh!

Give me water, my fellow, to wash my feet!
I ask for water, my dear Pierre, to wash my feet!
I ask for water to wash my feet!
Joseph who is dangerous is not here, he has gone to the city!
Joseph who is dangerous is not here, he has gone to the city!

Another bit of gossip with perhaps a more graphic account of the woman's deceit tells what happens in Achélo's house when he isn't home:

Viré do' allé!
Oh viré do' allé!
Achélo viré do' allé!
Viré do' allé!
Oh viré do' allé!

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* Exclamatory.
† Exclamatory.
‡ Exclamatory.

Ac Courlander 8-6 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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Achélo vini dò' allé!
A la papa vini gi'yan ennui nan chemin!
A la papa vini gi'yan ennui calmé! [Ex. 110]

Turns his back and goes!
Oh, turns his back and goes!
Achélo turns his back and goes!
Turns his back and goes!
Oh, turns his back and goes!
Achélo turns his back and goes!
When papa turns, a man goes into his room!
When papa turns, a man climbs into his bed!

But a note of sympathy for Achélo creeps into the last stanza:

Vini dò' allé!
Vini dò' allé!
Achélo ou pas nan ennui ok!

Turns his back and goes!
Turns his back and goes!
Achélo, you are not in the joke, ok!

In the following song, a young man confesses to having despoiled a girl and blemished the family's reputation, but he tells the father and mother not to worry about it.

Bonjou' bonjou' Manman Sonn,
Fille ou c'est perdu.
Bonjou' bonjou' Papa Sonn,
Ti fille ou c'est perdu.
Pé, mo ba ou l'a'gent.

Good evening, good evening Mother Sonn,
Your daughter is ruined.
Good evening, good evening Father Sonn,
Your little daughter is ruined.
Don't say a word, I will pay you for it.

An elderly gentleman named Alman fails to come out of his adventure with the same self-assurance, and the community takes full note of the details:

Alman allé bambilé,
Alman allé bambilé,
Alman allé bambilé,
Li retou'né pied cassé!
Pas pa'lé parole ça.
Si ou pa'lé parole ça,
Gain yon grand monsie
Qui va fâché!

Alman went on a spree,
Alman went on a spree,
Alman went on a spree,
He came home with a broken foot!
Don't say a word about it.
If you say anything about it
There is an old gentleman
Who will be angry!

2: Courlander 8-5 (1977-1960) 1960 SV3 Hall SV3

[The Vodoun Pantheon]

Legba in Dahomey, the performers hold a carved phallus between their legs and perform copulating movements. The Haitian Legba is depicted as an aged limping Ioa, and the carved phallus has become a grotesque crutch-cane that fits into the crutch of the legs. The Dahomean Legba is remembered elsewhere in the New World, notably in Dutch Guiana, Brazil, and Cuba. Until relatively recent times he was known among the Negroes of Louisiana by the name Papa Lebat.[4]

Legba Gbaxo Gbenon (Legba of the Highway). A special manifestation of Legba who guards the highway.

Legba Kalfu (Legba of the Crossroads). A special manifestation of Legba who guards the crossroads.

Legba Mah' Bertrow (Legba Master of the Household). The Legba who protects the house and its grounds.

Legba Lafleurwood. One of the Legba family.

Legba Kivi. One of the Legba family.

Legba Agbatwo. Said to be a "Nago" deity.

Attibon Kivi. One of the Legba family.

Attibon Samaxo. One of the Legba family.

Attibon Kosi. One of the Legba family.

Ogoun Feraille, often referred to as Mah' Ogoun. The chief and ancestor of a large family of loa whose activities have to do with blacksmithing and war, which are closely related. Ogoun Feraille is a patron of warriors and the forge; his symbol is a piece of forged iron, such as a machete, a hoe blade, a saber, or a piece of iron chain. In West Africa, Ogoun is considered a patron of hunters as well.[1] He was widely known by various peoples in Dahomey and Nigeria. In Dahomey he was considered a child of the divine Mawu and Lisa,[2] and among the Yoruba of Nigeria he was regarded as a brother of Chango and Dada,[3] two spirits who survive in the Haitian pantheon. An altar to Ogoun Feraille, like that of the loa Chango, may consist of a pile of iron scrap, perhaps a broken sugar vat. In Cuba, Ogoun Feraille is a prominent deity in both the Arara (Dahomey) and the Lucumí (Yoruba) cults. Although absorbed exclusively into the Dahomé family of rites in Haiti, Ogoun Feraille and his entire family and escorte are designated as belonging to the Nago "nation." Their color, like that of heated iron, is red. Ogoun Feraille survived until recent times in Louisiana as Joe Feraille.[4]

Ogoun Fer (Ogoun Iron). He is sometimes called Ogoun St. Jacques, St. Jacques Majeur, or simply St. Jacques, being identified with the saint of that name.

Ogoun Marinquette (Ogoun Blacksmith).

Ogoun Balala. One of the Ogoun brothers.

Ogoun Baltasa Mujon. One of the Ogoun brothers.

Ogoun Jenjen, or Jianon. One of the Ogoun brothers.

Ogoun Badagry, or Batagal. Said to be a "grandson" of Mah' Ogoun. He is a "work" loa, as well as an ironworker and a warrior, and helps in the fields, especially in time of sickness. Badagry is the name of a town near the mouth of the Ogoun River in western Nigeria. According to a priest of the Cuban Dahomé cult, the word Asogwi was used to designate the circumcision house in Dahomey. Ogoun Badagry thus may have been associated with that shrine.

Chango, or Ogoun Chango. A member of the Ogoun family and, like most of his brothers, a warrior and ironworker. Chango's altar is usually a pile of scrap iron, or

1 [Ibid., pp. 201ff. Cf. p. 354 Category 116. -- Analyst]
2 [Ellis, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa, p. 67. Cf. p. 354, Category 116. -- Analyst]
3 [Herskovits, Op. Cit., pp. 105ff. Cf. p. 354, Cat. 116. -- Analyst]
4 [Ellis, The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples, pp. 45, 60ff. Cf. p. 354 Cat. 116. -- Analyst]
5 [Library of Congress Recording, No. 101. Cf. p. 354 Cat. 116. -- Analyst]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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steadying his attention, he practically hypnotizes him back into full consciousness. As soon as the possessed is normal again, water out of the calabash is poured at the central post and a sign of the cross is made with the candle before it.

Contrary to the expectation of thrill-seeking white visitors, the Vodun dance does not merit the name of an orgy. True, the dancers wear their old clothes, for they are going to have violent exercise; true also, those who are possessed give the impression of losing some of their inhibitions. But the dancers do not embrace each other as at a white man's dance; the drinking which occurs is hardly ever excessive; and the climax of a successful dance is a religious experience. The Haitian is no more obsessed by sex than is the American; indeed, living simply and without many of the artificial restraints of "civilization," he is probably less so. What white visitors sometimes see, under the impression that they are witnessing a Vodun dance, is nothing more than a secular Saturday night social dance. It, too, has drum rhythms instead of an orchestra, musical instruments being rare in Haiti; but the dance has no more religious (or "Voodoo") significance than a barn dance in the United States.

Creed and practice go hand in hand in Haiti. The Vodun worshiper believes in the loa of his faith and does the things necessary to get in touch with them. These conceptions are the major part of his creed, as the corresponding actions form the bulk of his religious activity.

A few articles of the creed remain. "I believe in respect to twins . . ." Hundreds of so-called primitive peoples see in twins some special significance, now fortunate, now tragic. Many of the tribes along the Atlantic coast of Africa thought of twins as an omen, so that the presence of ritual regard for them in Haiti is hardly surprising. It is probably incorrect to speak of the worship, or the cult, of twins, for they are not deified, nor is there a common ritual for them: thousands of persons pay them no homage whatever. One family has a high regard for twins because it has numbered them among its ancestors or recent relatives; another family pays respect to all twins because a priest has advised seeking the good luck which comes from *marassa* (twins). There seems to be some confusion of thought about this aspect of religion: twins are not gods, but merely omens from the gods; yet sacrifices are made to them. Christmas and harvest are the usual seasons for the offering. Food is prepared in the morning

3: Leyburn Z-4,5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

IX

HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

TOLERANT understanding of the ways of alien people is rare in matters relating to sex. Occasionally we may regard marital and sexual practices which differ from our own as amusing or ridiculous; more frequently we find them distasteful and disgusting. A long religious heritage has implanted in us a definite personal morality, familiar in Puritanism and in the codes of the great majority of early American pioneers. Accompanying and dominated by this religious aspect has been the legal idea of sexual morality. A middle-class tradition of private property, hence of orderly marriages legally recognized, has schooled us for centuries to approve certain moral and sexual rules: monogamic marriage, children born in wedlock, a public wedding ceremony by approved authorities, censure of sexual relations which might confuse the passage of property. Although sympathetic tolerance for foreign ways has never been an outstanding American characteristic, it is least evident in connection with divergent sexual practices. We do not remind ourselves of the utilitarian basis of a part of our own sexual codes.

Where people have economic and social backgrounds different from those of Western Europe and the United States, other codes will prevail. Elements which have made American moral standards what they are were lacking or appeared in different form in Haiti. Instead of middle-class European tradition there was African tribal practice; instead of diffused small private properties there was slavery; instead of the Puritan notion that sex relations were in general sinful was the less rigorous view that sexual intercourse was entirely normal; instead of the example of monogamous family life constantly before the minds of children growing up, there was the example of libertinage among lofty whites and laxness among the blacks.

Nothing in the experience of the slave régime could have predisposed toward orderly marriage these people, soon to become Haitians. Certain masters actually prohibited weddings among their slaves, while most others discouraged it, since the development of family ties among the blacks would only have made for complication

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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The truth is, marriage and moral conditions differ from economic and political conditions in that they are not so immediate and pressing in their effect upon individual lives. If these are not attended to today, tomorrow will find our bellies empty and our state overrun by enemies. But sex relations go on willy-nilly, and children are born into families: there will still be marriage and a moral problem to attend to when order has been brought into practical affairs. Toussaint was involved in a diplomatic battle in which the participants were the best minds of France, England, and the United States. Beside these mighty problems upon which depended the economic and political future of his people, the question of a standard of sex conduct was definitely secondary.

So it must have seemed to Dessalines, the founder of the state and first "law-giver" of Haiti. By his official actions it is evident that the economy of the country was his primary concern, with defense against a return of the French a close second. In his pronouncements he bowed respectfully to religion and then postponed action until some more convenient season. He pronounced likewise some very proper sentiments on marriage and morals, calling attention to the benefits of wedlock, piously deprecating sensuality and voluptuousness. His imperial constitution of 1805 encouraged lawful unions, treating marriage as a socially virtuous state to be cultivated.

This was all words, however, and came strangely from the black general who was, as everyone knew, a notorious libertine. He lectured his people on the danger of yielding to their passions, yet showed no intention of controlling his own impulses or those of his favorites. He was, indeed, the last man in Haiti to make a gesture toward sexual morality among the people, for although he was married his daily life was a complete negation of moral precept. In every town he habitually visited he established mistresses, bestowing large sums of money upon them. He employed every sort of seduction, honor, and gift to conquer the virtue of females who valued their "respectability." Actually, he did not often need to use violence, for the prevailing moral tone was not so high but that most young and attractive women would yield to their Emperor.

The sternly upright Haitian historian, Madiou, has a formidable paragraph on the vices of Dessalines. He tries partially to excuse him on the grounds of his fury at discovering conspiracies against his authority among his colored lieutenants, asserting that his early gen-

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erosity and equity now gave way to malevolence and personal license: 114

Putting no restraint upon his passions, he travelled about, followed by actors, dancers, musicians, and courtesans. An indefatigable dancer, as soon as he arrived in a place he gave a ball. Under Toussaint Louverture, in order to please the Governor-General everyone approached the holy altar; under Dessalines one gained glory by dancing well. The Emperor, giving himself up to scandalous pleasures, forgot that he was head of the state. The greatest immorality reigned about him. With a gaiety sometimes grotesque, he told the ladies who frequented his court how much he admired their beauty, no matter how ugly they actually were. Following his example, his major officers of state kept concubines in every town in the empire. . . . When the emperor entered a town, the honest women were gravely disturbed, for their virtue was menaced not only by him but also by his officers of state. Many mothers kept their daughters shut up to keep them from the notice of those who were powerful enough to take them, with impunity, by violence.[1]

Marriage, then, looked at from the standards of any white Western country, was in a sorry state in Haiti. Continued warfare had broken up many even of the families which, though unrecognized by the white planters, had nevertheless been formed during slavery; and the camp life of soldiers roaming the countryside confirmed the casual attitude of the people toward sex. Every ex-slave was a hero, and liberty was sweet. Under Dessalines it was scarcely wise for a prominent man to marry an attractive wife, the Emperor might so soon set himself to seduce her. Above all, there was no tradition of formal marriage. This was the chief factor to bear upon future marriage and sexual customs of the Haitians; and in appraising them is the paramount fact to keep in mind.

Meanwhile, children were being born. Their mothers were known, but often the fathers were not, for the vast majority of infants were born out of wedlock. Dessalines, a realist except in matters which touched his vanity, saw the necessity of establishing a status for these children, not on grounds of morality but for economic expediency, to avoid future disputes over inheritance. French precedent did not serve his need, for according to French law an illegitimate child may not inherit: a parent in France is not free to leave his property as he will, but must pass it on to his legitimate heirs.

1. Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, III, 230.

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X

HOME LIFE OF THE ÉLITE

565 581 ONE brief characterization of the élite might be that they are those who carefully observe the proprieties. The proprieties are those of France, and among them is "common sense" in marriage.

175 565 People of privilege in colonial times, which were the fountainhead of élite tradition, lived at ease and did not concern themselves with manual labor. Nor were they burdened by puritanical codes of 831 581 sexual morality, but on the contrary enjoyed sex relations with whatever attractive women came their way. But they would have thought it sheer folly to allow momentary delight to interfere with the very practical matter of choosing a wife. Marriage meant increasing one's fortune, strengthening one's social position and connections, establishing one's children. Romance was as irrelevant to all this as to choosing a business partner. This attitude of the French planters, current even in France of the present day, was the standard for freedmen.

175 565 588 581 Even when wealth was most plentiful in colonial society it had not been always easy to find the proper wife for an affranchi youth. For a man to remain single, however, did not mean that he remained celibate. He might, on the contrary, contract a fairly permanent informal union of love, while discreetly refraining from a marriage which would jeopardize his own or his family's status. Such informal unions were not generally regarded as immoral. Good taste, it was felt, was a sufficient guide in all matters of sex outside of marriage.

175 565 581 The unsettled condition of the colony between the slave insurrection of 1791 and the achievement of independence in 1803–4 did not change the affranchi concept of suitable marriage. During the brief two-year rule of Dessalines, the ideal of propriety in marriage remained the same in spite of the Emperor's efforts to undermine the importance of legal weddings and the legitimacy of children. Pétion, upon his accession in 1806, showed himself a true member of the mulatto aristocratic group—indifferent to the morals of the masses so long as custom settled their problems for them, and content with the marriage traditions of the élite. He said publicly what was neces-

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Parents are generally kind to their children, so far as physical
855 punishment is concerned. The average peasant child can hardly
861 properly be said to be "brought up": he merely grows, eats whatever
152 his family eats or whatever fruits he can pick up, and learns his place in the community as he matures. In anger, parents are likely to use in correction the first thing that comes to hand. There is a surprising callousness to pain among these generally kindly people: they beat their donkeys unmercifully, and strap harness over open sores; they carry chickens, head down and feet tied together and mouths gaping, for miles in the sun; they revel in gory cockfights. If, therefore, a parent is minded to beat his child, he will probably do a thorough
[578] job of it. A peasant woman, pommeling her son with a broomstick, replied to the protests of a white passer-by, "*Li nègue; li pas fait li mal.*" ("He's a Negro; it won't hurt him.") The interference of a stranger in the beating of a wife by her man, armed with a club, was resented by both man and woman as an interference with a purely family quarrel.

831 The concept of sexual continence is lacking among the peasants.
834 Sex, indeed, hardly enters the realm of morality except in connection
864 with adulterous dalliance of one man with another's woman. There is no virtue in abstaining from sex relations when the sexual urge is strong. Mothers tell love stories in all their frank details to their young daughters, and some who care about such matters are adept in all lore connected with stimulating and satisfying a man's desire.[5]
[342] Since huts are small and the whole family sleeps in the same room, children have ample opportunity to observe the sexual life of their parents. If a girl, as a result of her own experiments, has a child born to her, there is no disgrace. Practically every peasant is "illegitimate," so that the term means nothing; a baby will soon be old enough to assist in the work of the home, thus becoming an asset. It is expected that as soon as a youth grows up he will find a mate and begin a family of his own.

241 The family is as important an element of peasant life as formal
439 marriage is unimportant. It is the economic unit. Ever since the days
593 of Pétion Haitian economy has been one of small things: even the crops are small subsistence crops of maize, millet, beans, rice, yams, and frequently trees of bananas, plantains, and coffee, which require no particular cultivation. Enough coffee has been produced in Haiti for annual export ever since 1804, but until recent years the beans

5. See Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse*, pp. 22 ff.